

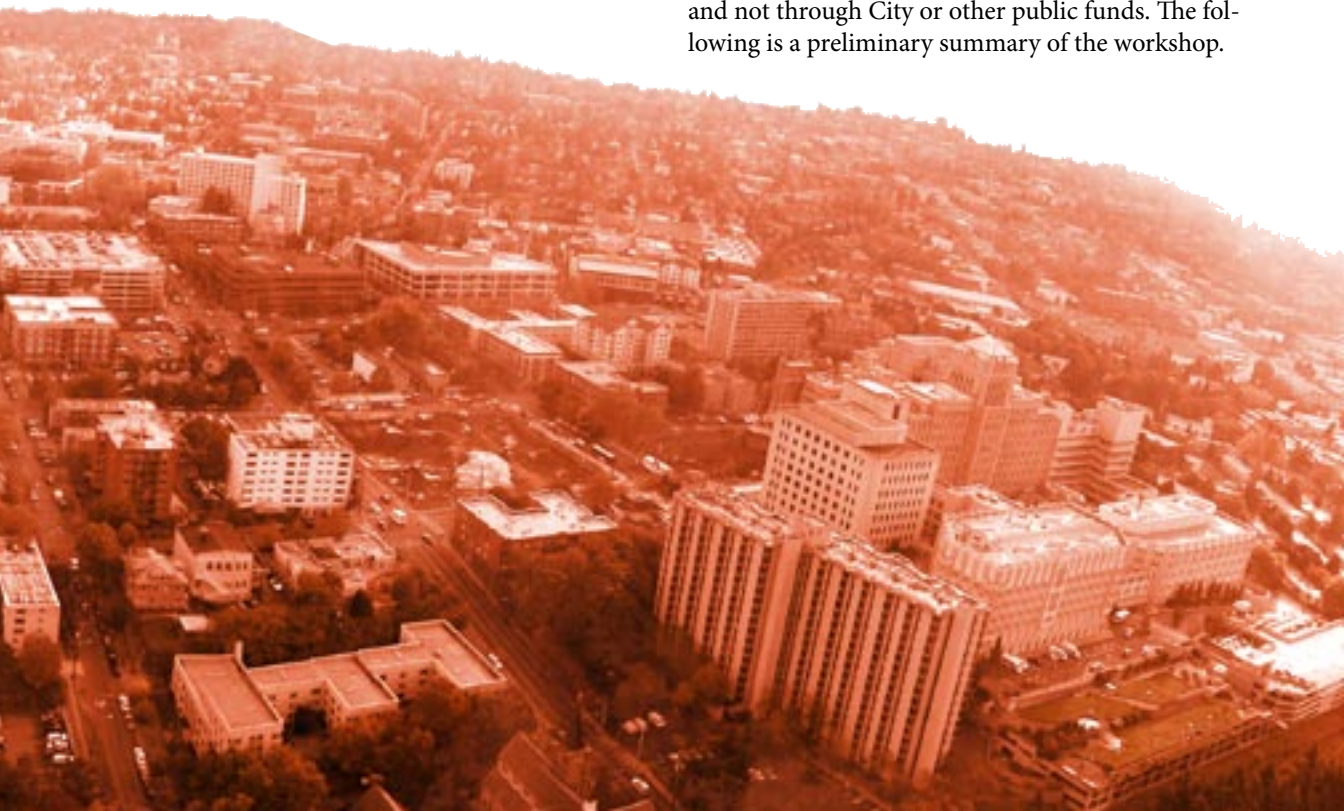
# 1st Hill West Slope Design Workshop Summary



On May 23, The Department of Planning and Development's CityDesign Program facilitated a workshop with First Hill stakeholders on streetscape design for the "West Slope" subarea of the neighborhood. This workshop is one in a series that will be held to address streetscape and urban design issues and solutions in each of several subareas. The purpose of the West Slope workshop was to develop design guidelines to address the following:

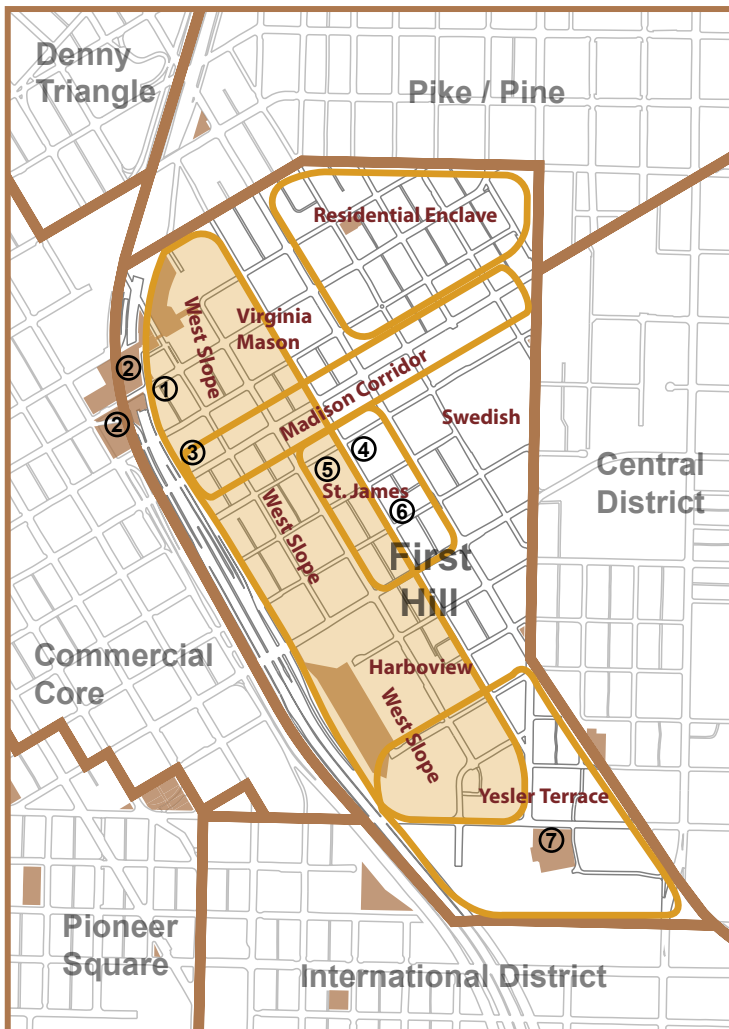
- ♦ *A menu of pedestrian improvements and amenities compatible with the character and uses of the West Slope.*
- ♦ *Options for connecting with open space on publicly and privately owned properties in the West Slope area.*
- ♦ *Pedestrian connections between the entry to Freeway Park along Seneca Street and the West Slope residential area along 8th and 9th Avenues.*
- ♦ *Pedestrian connections between the West Slope residential area along 8th and 9th Avenues and the Yesler Terrace Community Center and neighborhood.*
- ♦ *Pedestrian connections between the West Slope, the downtown core, and the Civic Center.*
- ♦ *Connections between the recreational, cultural, civic and health care facilities of First Hill, including Freeway Park, Virginia Mason Medical Center, Town Hall, First Presbyterian Church, St. James Cathedral, Trinity Episcopal Church, Harborview Hospital and the Yesler Terrace Community Center.*

The workshop was a collaboration between community members, developers, and City staff on how to assist developers of properties in the West Slope to provide appropriate pedestrian improvements in adjacent public rights of way as well as on-site open spaces. These streetscape and open space opportunities for the neighborhood are being funded through public benefit feature incentives that are part of private development projects in the area and not through City or other public funds. The following is a preliminary summary of the workshop.



# Study Area

The **West Slope** area of First Hill is one of 8 subareas within the neighborhood, each of which has a distinct character and use associated with it. The **West Slope** area is bounded by 7th Avenue to the west, Terry Avenue to the east, Yesler Way to the south, Union Street to the north. It borders Freeway Park, Interstate 5, and the Yesler Community Center. Major institutions in the area include Harborview Medical Center, a portion of Virginia Mason Medical Center, Town Hall and St. James Cathedral.



## First Hill Study Area

### Legend

Open Space

Subareas

### Places

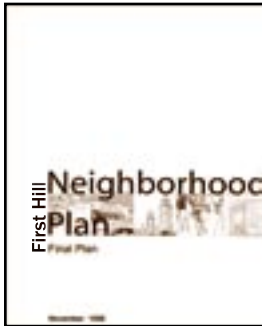
1. Town Hall
2. Freeway Park
3. First Presbyterian Church
4. O'Dea High School
5. St. James Cathedral
6. Frye Art Museum
7. Yesler Community Center



# Background

*In addition to recent development occurring in the area, several planning activities have led up to the West Slope design workshop. These are described below.*

## First Hill Neighborhood Plan (1998)



In 1998, First Hill Planning Committee completed the First Hill Neighborhood Plan. The planning committee represented the interests of a wide range of stakeholders including major employers (medical centers and educational institutions), residents, businesses, cultural organizations, religious institutions, and public, quasi-public and non-profit organizations. The neighborhood plan established a vision and goals and recommended strategies and activities for improving open space, streetscape, and connections. Key strategies and activities related to the West Slope area include the “Downtown Connector” for connecting First Hill to downtown and the “8th Avenue Residential District” that proposes a residential enclave between First Hill and the Civic Center. The West Slope design workshop is an important step in realizing the vision and goals of the First Hill Neighborhood Plan.

## Blue Ring Connections (2002 - present)



In 2002, the Department of Planning and Development’s CityDesign group developed the Blue Ring strategy, proposing an open space and pedestrian improvement connections plan. Currently, the Blue Ring strategy has been incorporated as part of the Mayor’s Center City Seattle strategy and proposes a system of pedestrian connections that would link the major civic destinations and neighborhoods of Seattle’s Center City. The First Hill portion of the Blue Ring included streetscape improvements along 8th and 9th Avenues that would connect Freeway Park, Town Hall, St. James Cathedral, Harborview Hospital, and the new Yesler Community Center. The Blue Ring also envisioned a pedestrian connection between the Yesler Community Center and the Chinatown/International District neighborhood. These improvements would benefit both the neighborhood and provide strong connections between First Hill and adjacent neighborhoods.

## First Hill Parks Plan (2005)



The Department of Parks and Recreation with its consultant, the MAKERS, is analyzing the park and open space resources needed to serve the First Hill area and meet the demands of housing and employment growth projected for First Hill in the next 20 years. The DPR has funds from the Pro Parks Levy that may be used for acquisition of property on First Hill for use as public park space. DPR is working on a broader vision for parks and recreation in the neighborhood. The First Hill Park Plan is also a part of the Mayor’s Center City Seattle strategy. The goal of the First Hill Park Plan is based on an examination of current and proposed development, for a system of parks and open space linkages to meet the needs of future residents and workers in this urban neighborhood. Measures to implement the plan may include public-private partnerships, creative land use controls, redevelopment of public rights of way, and consideration of potential funding sources. Some of the potential elements in this plan include children’s play areas, active recreation space, pedestrian corridors, and streetscape improvements. The West Slope design workshop addresses the latter two elements that connect park and open spaces in the neighborhood. Outcomes from the West Slope and other subarea workshops will be an integral part of parks planning for First Hill.

*For more information about revitalizing First Hill, and links to the above publications, visit:*  
[www.seattle.gov/dpd/planning/firsthill](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/planning/firsthill).



# Workshop Summary

**T**he First Hill West Slope design workshop opened with DPD CityDesign director Guillermo Romano describing the purpose of the workshop. This was followed with presentations by developers of the major projects underway in the area. Workshop participants then broke into two working groups for the remainder of the afternoon. One group focused on the area north of Madison Street while the other focused on the area south of Madison Street.

Workshop participants included representatives from First Hill neighborhood organizations, developers and design consultants working in the area, West Slope health care, cultural, and religious institutions, and City of Seattle staff. A member of the Seattle Design Commission also participated in the workshop.

**N**orth of Madison Street Team  
The North of Madison Street Team included a number of community members who did not feel there is a need to emphasize connections between areas, especially between the Harborview and Virginia Mason medical center campuses at either end of the West Slope, which were not seen as functionally related. Instead, this team felt that the focus should be on addressing general improvements related to public safety and maintenance. However, there was support for improving access to Freeway Park from First Hill, and strengthening links with Downtown.

In general, priority improvements included better pedestrian lighting, particularly along 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and better treatment of mature street trees in streetscape design (enlarging tree pits with sidewalk improvements). Currently, tree canopies block overhead street lighting and make it ineffective for



pedestrians. Terry Avenue was identified as a strong “character-giving” element of the neighborhood and a good pedestrian pathway, whereas 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue was considered an arterial with a more vehicular orientation. A potential park site was identified at the southeast corner of Cherry and Terry Streets. Addressing negative conditions around the “pit” area below the elevated portion of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue north of Seneca Street, including the adjacent Jensonia Apartments, was another priority.

## **S**outh of Madison Street Team

The South of Madison Street Team included a small number of community members and a large number of developers that have on-going and future projects in the area. Major concerns of this team were street improvements, connections with downtown, distinguishing pedestrian streets from main arterials for vehicles and their character. Most of the con-

versation centered on a tree inventory for the area, open space, and improving security and safety with unobstructed views of public spaces.

In general, the group recommended a street tree inventory be conducted to document tree species, location, and need for preservation. Major streetscape on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and along I-5 is needed as a noise buffer and to improve connections to downtown. Tree pits and a more active edge of transition should be added along that corridor. Where trees come into contact with overhead utility cables, the result is unattractive and unnatural tree shapes. It was suggested that street trees be located on the south west side of the street where there is more sun exposure. These areas could be alternated with “special places” that can be designed as part of adjacent development projects. Weather protection, minimum of 12 feet wide sidewalk with a 3 feet tree pit are considered minimum standards. In some locations, tree canopies block overhead street lighting and make it ineffective for pedestrians. Street lighting should be less than 15 feet tall to effectively provide lighting under tree canopy, which in some places reaches 40 feet tall.



# Preliminary Recommendations

The following are preliminary streetscape design recommendations in the West Slope area of First Hill. These were gleaned from the design workshop discussions and form the basis for street design guidelines.

## North of Madison Street

- ♦ Improve pedestrian lighting
- ♦ Provide adequate space and maintenance for street trees. Reduce conflicts between street lighting and street trees.
- ♦ Design 8th Avenue as an amenity for adjacent high density development.
- ♦ Locate open spaces along 8th Avenue (north of Madison Street).
- ♦ Use streetscape design and improvements to enhance access to Freeway Park at Piggott corridor.
- ♦ Develop gateway improvements at Seneca, Spring, Madison and James Streets to draw downtown pedestrians to First Hill.
- ♦ Consider parcels adjacent to Town Hall as an opportunity site that may accommodate cultural uses as part of a development.
- ♦ Provide more market rate housing along the edges of Freeway Park to improve public safety

## South of Madison Street

- ♦ Locate street trees along the south and west edges of parcels to maximize sun exposure.
- ♦ Provide a minimum sidewalk width of 12' and a minimum tree pit width of 3' in the right of way cross section.
- ♦ Provide weather protection over sidewalks with new development.
- ♦ Pedestrian street lighting should be less than 15' tall to effectively provide lighting below the tree canopy.
- ♦ Design 8th Avenue as an amenity for adjacent high density development.
- ♦ Locate open spaces along 9th Avenue.
- ♦ Improve pedestrian crossings where 9th Ave. intersects with Alder, Cherry and Madison Streets.
- ♦ Provide more market rate housing in problem areas, such as Cherry and James. A possible relocation and/or modification of some structures as well as a hill climb on Cherry Street that could be continued under I-5 to improve public safety. Better lighting and other uses than parking were suggested. The underpasses of Cherry and James were identified as design challenges.

## Suggested Future Development

- ♦ Block southwest of St. James Cathedral: open space over an underground parking structure
- ♦ Block bounded by 7th and 8th Avenues and Marion and Columbia Streets: open space over an underground parking structure
- ♦ Block west of St. James Cathedral: "Spanish Steps"
- ♦ Block bounded by 8th and 9th Avenues and Marion and Columbia Streets: a special opportunity area
- ♦ Northeast corner of 8th Avenue and Columbia Street: open space.
- ♦ Northeast corner of Seneca and 9th Avenue intersection: a potential gateway/plaza for pedestrians approaching from the south on 9th Avenue.
- ♦ Parcels around Town Hall, now used as surface parking lots: consider possibility of developing the area as a focus of cultural activities.

Denny  
Triangle

# Proposed Connections and Open Spaces for First Hill West Slope

Pike / Pine

LEGEND	
	Important Pedestrian Streets
	Likely New Development
	Potential Parks
	Existing Parks
	Potential New Development
	Blue Ring
	Existing Buildings
	Pavement Edge

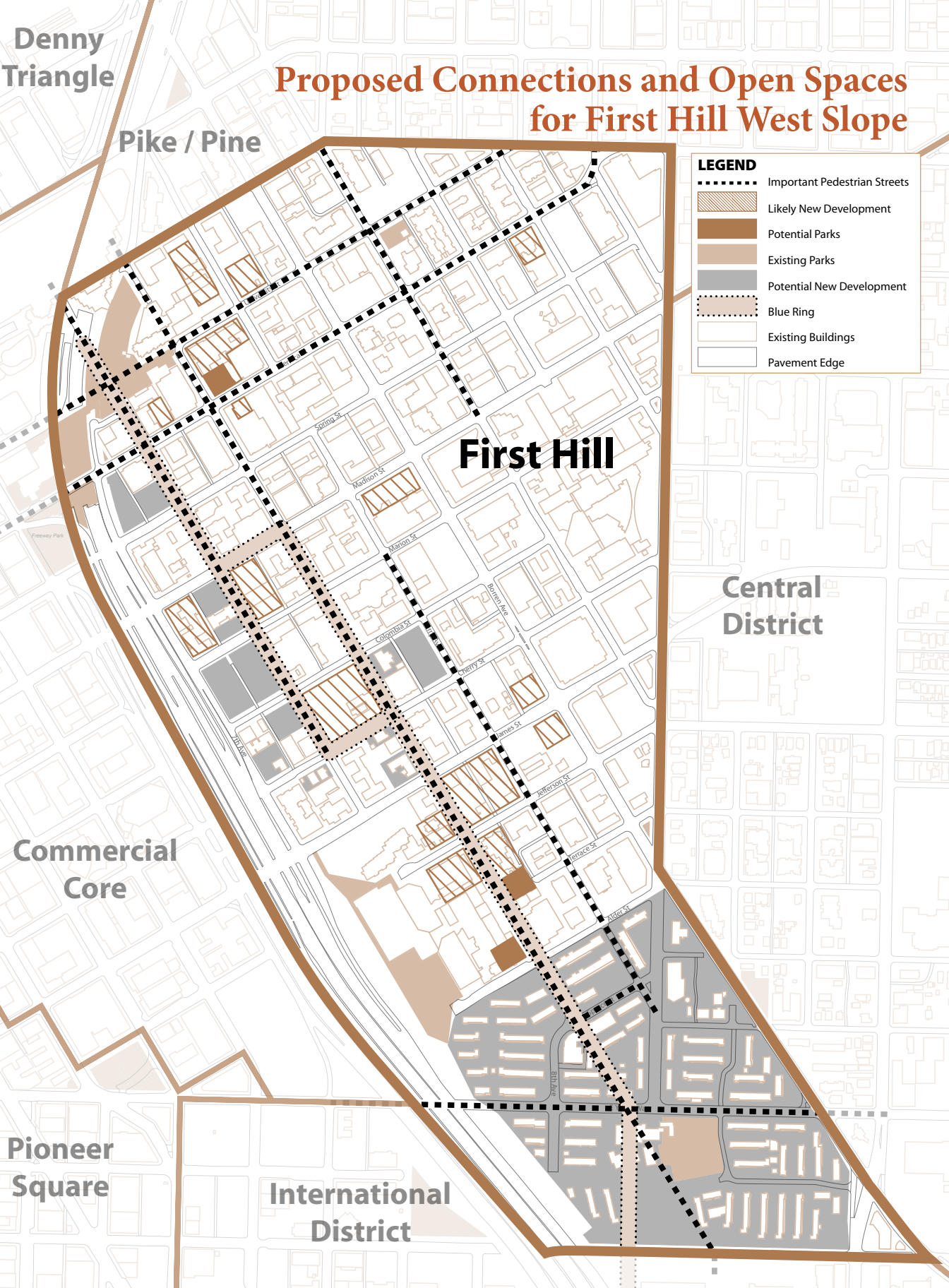
First Hill

Central  
District

Commercial  
Core

Pioneer  
Square

International  
District





# Participants

Workshop participants included representatives from First Hill neighborhood organizations, developers and design consultants working in the area, West Slope health care, cultural and religious institutions, and City of Seattle staff. A member of the Seattle Design Commission also participated in the workshop.

**Kent Angier** Kauri Investments

**Beverly Barnett** SDOT

**Bob Bengford** MAKERS

**Lyle Bicknell** DPD

**Bill Blair** DPR

**David Brewster** Town Hall

**Larry Brouse** St. James Cathedral

**Jose Cervantes** DON

**Joanne Coombs** First Hill Improvement Assoc.

**Paul Donaldson** Perkins & Will

**Brian Englund** Presbyterian Retirement Communities Northwest

**Jim Erickson** First Hill Community Council

**Susanne Friedman** DPR

**Barbara Gray** SDOT

**Moir Gray** SDOT

**Dean Gregory** Murase Associates/PRCN

**Don Harris** DPR

**Christine Kiefer** Harborview

**Gary Johnson** DPD

**Julie Lawton** Lawton Project Management/PRCN

**Dennis Meier** DPD

**Steve Moddemeyer** DPD

**Kristin O'Donnell** Yesler Terrace Comm. Council

**Sheri Olson** Seattle Design Commission

**Denny Onslow** Harbor Properties

**Steve Orser** Harbor Properties

**Esta Pekow** First Hill Improvement Association

**Bruce Rips** DPD

**Guillermo Romano** DPD

**Tom Sager** Seneca Group/Horizon House

**Fred Savaglio** Virginia Mason Medical Center

**Blair Savidge** Savidge Investments

**Dan Simpson** NBBJ

**Sheila Smith** Town Hall

**Scott Springer** Opus NW

**John Stowell** First Hill Improvement Association

**Vince Vergel de Dios** NBBJ



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